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CONSUMER PROTECTION DIVISION
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Press Release

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**ATTORNEY GENERAL DARRELL MCGRAW WARNS
CONSUMERS "BEWARE OF INTERNATIONAL LOTTERY SCAMS"**

Attorney General Darrell McGraw would like to alert West Virginia consumers to an old scam that has made its way to the Internet. Attorney General McGraw stated that his Consumer Protection Division has been inundated this week with telephone calls from consumers who have received e-mails from various companies notifying them that they have won money in an "international lottery." One company, known as Lottery Winners International, e-mailed consumers saying that a winning ticket number had attached to the consumer's e-mail address and the consumer had won \$1 million. The e-mail warns consumers to tell no one about the e-mail but to call a telephone number outside the United States to find out how to claim their \$1 million. Consumers who call are told they have to send money to the lottery company in order to claim their winnings. The consumer is told that this money is to pre-pay income taxes on the winnings or to pay fees to transfer the money to the United States. The amount the company tries to scam from consumers can be as little as \$25 but often exceeds \$1,000.

Consumers have also been receiving faxes and regular mail from these international lottery companies. In West Virginia, it is illegal for a consumer to be charged any money to collect a prize they have won. Attorney General McGraw also warns consumers, "These lottery companies are all located outside the United States, typically in Canada or the Netherlands. Once you send money to a company located in another country, there is very little that can be done to get your money back."

Consumers who have questions may call the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division at 1-800-368-8808 or 304-558-8986.

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